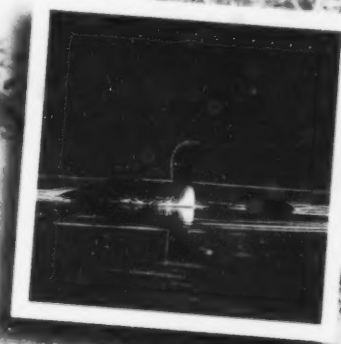


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Vision and Goals

Our lands and waters sustain all life and are the primary source of spiritual inspiration, education, legends, history and economic well-being. For many Northerners the land is an integral part of who we are and how we define ourselves. This deep-rooted connection to the land is reflected in words heard often across the North, "The land takes care of us, we take care of the land."

Our goals are:

- To protect special natural and cultural areas in the Northwest Territories.
- To protect core representative areas within each ecoregion of the Northwest Territories.

The Broader Context

There are many areas of land and water with special natural or cultural values across the Northwest Territories (NWT). These areas may be important to local people or they may be of territorial, national or even international significance. Many such areas are now protected under federal and territorial programs. However, there are gaps in the existing system. A Protected Areas Strategy will enable additional areas to be identified, evaluated and designated.

The NWT Protected Areas Strategy (PAS) is a guide to promote the community-based development of a system of protected areas throughout the Northwest Territories. In August 1996, the federal and territorial governments made a commitment to create a Protected Areas Strategy. In April 1999, the territorial Minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development announced that the Strategy was approved by the NWT Cabinet. The Strategy provides a means to identify, establish and protect special natural and cultural areas in the Northwest Territories.

The Protected Areas Strategy should focus on developing an overall framework and set of criteria to guide the work of identifying and establishing protected areas in the NWT. The task of developing concrete protected area proposals should be left primarily to communities, regional organizations and/or land claim bodies and processes.

(As defined during a multi-stakeholder workshop in April 1998.)



*"The land takes
care of us, we
take care of the
land."*

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*"The land takes
care of us, we
take care of the
land."*

The Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest Territories have always had strong ties to the land. Their rights concerning the resources of the land, and their responsibilities for managing those resources, are being constitutionally recognized through the settlement of land claims, the clarification of treaty rights, and the creation of regionally based resource management bodies. Such agreements affirm the leadership role of local people in land and water management, giving them more control over protecting the land as well as maintaining resource development options for the future. The Protected Areas Strategy conforms to all land claims agreements (see main document). In the event of any unforeseen conflicts between this Strategy and such agreements, the latter takes precedence over the Strategy. Where a proposed protected area is wholly or partially within the settlement region of a comprehensive land claim, no process under the PAS, including the establishment of interim protection, shall take place without the consent and participation of the land claim body, and no protected area shall be designated without the express consent of the land claim body.

Defining a Protected Area

A protected area as defined by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) is:

An area of land or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and its associated natural and cultural resources, managed through legal or other effective means.

Levels of protection can range from strict preservation to sustainable commercial activities. In the Northwest Territories development of non-renewable resources is an integral part of the economy and may be accommodated within certain types of protected areas.

Protected areas are established for a number of reasons.

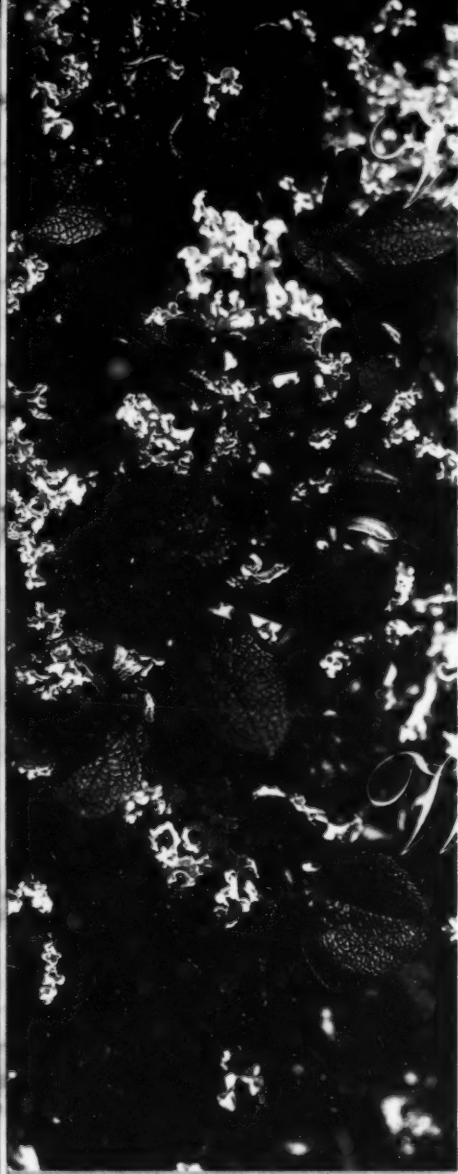
Some of these are:

- To protect specific natural and cultural features
- To maintain ecosystems
- To protect wilderness
- To preserve species and genetic diversity
- To protect important harvesting areas

To accomplish these objectives the Strategy will seek to:

1. Raise awareness of the need for protected areas and assist with the development of protected area processes in regions with unsettled Aboriginal and treaty rights claims.
2. Provide the tools to support the identification, modification and/or establishment of protected areas in regions with and without settled land claims.
3. Establish mutually beneficial partnerships while clarifying the roles and responsibilities for identifying and establishing protected areas.
4. Clarify the roles and responsibilities for identifying and establishing protected areas.
5. Define clear commitments for implementation.





*"Present and
future generations
of Northerners
will benefit."*

What will a Protected Areas Strategy Do?

- It will allow natural and cultural values to be represented in protected areas in the NWT.
- It will provide a more clearly defined context for resource development and conservation.
- It will reinforce the leadership role of communities, regional organizations and/or land claim bodies in land and water use management.
- It will help diminish concerns that future resource development may compromise the protection of special natural areas.
- It will help focus attention on the need for marine and freshwater protected areas.
- It will promote a more coordinated approach among organizations responsible for protected areas.

Who will Benefit from this Strategy?

Communities, Aboriginal governments, regional organizations and/or land claim bodies and all other Northerners will be supported in meeting their long-term protection goals for lands, waters and air critical to the health of their economies and cultures.

Resource-based industries and tourism interests will obtain greater clarity about land status, land-use access and development options.

Environmental interests will see significant progress towards national and international commitments to protecting representative examples of the NWT's natural regions.

Present and future generations of Northerners will benefit from the ecological, cultural and economic values protected today.

Additional benefits of protected areas may include:

- tourism and recreation opportunities
- appropriate use of renewable resources in a sustainable manner
- increased clarity for non-renewable resource development options
- scientific research and monitoring studies
- opportunities for spiritual renewal
- educational opportunities

Principles of the NWT Protected Areas Strategy

These general rules guide implementation of the PAS.

Precedence of Aboriginal and Treaty Rights Agreements

The Strategy conforms to all Aboriginal/inherent and treaty rights, land claims agreements and self-government agreements. In the event of any conflict between this Strategy and such agreements, the latter will take precedence.

Aboriginal Traditions

The Strategy recognizes the traditional land-based economies and cultures of Aboriginal peoples.

Mineral Tenure System

The Strategy recognizes that the existing system for acquiring mineral rights allows entry on specified Crown lands for the purpose of staking claims and prospecting. Once a mineral claim is staked, the holder has the ability to explore for and develop minerals, subject to all laws.

Access, Third Party Interests and Compensation

The Strategy recognizes and respects all obligations related to land and water access, third-party interests and compensation needs caused by the establishment of protected areas.

Land-Use Planning

Local land-use planning and resource management processes are to lead in identifying community and regional interests in areas being considered for protection.

Full Stakeholder Participation

A full range of stakeholders are to participate in all stages of planning and establishing protected areas.

Information Sharing

All relevant information is to be available to stakeholders, interest groups and the public.

Ecological Integrity

Core protected areas will be planned and managed to maintain biological diversity and ecological processes. In some cases, buffer zones with seasonal restrictions and connecting corridors may be needed.





*"The Strategy
promotes a
partnership
approach."*

Knowledge

The best available traditional, local and scientific knowledge is to be considered in selecting a protection tool, and in determining or modifying the boundaries of protected areas and management objectives.

Assessment of Representation of Ecoregions

An assessment of ecoregions to determine adequate representation as part of the evaluation of proposed protected areas is to be conducted.

Economic Opportunities

The Strategy recognizes the potential contribution of renewable and non-renewable resource development to the economic and social well-being of Northern residents. Wherever possible, protected area proposals for core representative areas will give priority to areas of low commercial value.

Industrial Development

Industrial developments such as mining, oil and gas surface work, forestry, agriculture, power generation and associated infrastructure in core representative areas are prohibited. Industrial activities may be accepted in other categories of protected areas when the activities are compatible with the values being protected and when restoration initiatives are planned.

Interim Protection

Where appropriate, interim protection measures are to be applied to maintain the values of proposed protected areas, while detailed evaluation studies are in progress.

Resource Development Assessment

Development potential (mines, pipelines, roads) and resource benefits are to be assessed as part of the evaluation of proposed protected areas.

Legislation

Existing legislation is to be used where possible. New or amended legislation and non-legislative tools may be considered where necessary.

Transboundary Protected Areas

The Strategy promotes a coordinated, partnership approach to protected area efforts that cross regional, territorial, provincial or national boundaries.

How will the Strategy be Implemented?

The job of planning protected areas lies primarily with communities, regional organizations and/or land claim bodies. At all stages, stakeholders, appropriate government institutions and the PAS Secretariat, will provide assistance in planning protected areas. There are eight steps an organization can use to obtain protected status for a selected area.

1. *Identify priority areas of interest*

The proponent community and/or regional organization should consult with residents to identify, document and evaluate potential sites.

2. *Prepare and review protected area proposal at regional level*

The proponent organization will prepare a preliminary proposal and submit it to the appropriate regional body for review and consideration.

3. *Review and submit proposal for candidate protected area status*

The preliminary proposal will be reviewed by the regional body which will then forward it to partnering/sponsoring government institutions for further evaluation and consultation.

4. *Consider/apply interim protection for candidate area*

The proponent organization will work with sponsoring government institutions to consider and, where necessary, develop terms and conditions for interim protection.

5. *Evaluate candidate area*

The proponent organization will coordinate a detailed evaluation of the area's ecological, cultural and economic values. A public review will be part of the evaluation.

6. *Seek formal establishment of protected area*

The proponent organization will refine details and boundaries of the protected area to reflect the evaluation and the public review. A formal proposal will be submitted to government institutions. The government institutions will recommend that a protected area be established or that the proposal be revised.

7. *Approve and designate protected area*

Upon acceptance of the formal proposal by government, appropriate regional bodies and partners will co-sign and announce protected area establishment agreement.

8. *Implement, monitor and review protected area*

This will vary according to the type of protected area, land claims legislation and management regime.





*"...we can still
say we have
wild spaces and
heritage places."*

Current Initiatives (Establishing Basic Building Blocks)

Federal and territorial governments are working with various stakeholders on the following topics:

- Legislation and regulations to match the needs and priorities of communities, regional organizations and/or land claim bodies as they relate to the PAS are being reviewed and revised.
- Coordination and cooperation between government institutions with responsibilities for terrestrial and marine protected areas is being strengthened.
- Science-based technical support is being provided for the identification and evaluation of potential protected area sites.
- A mineral and energy resource assessment process is being addressed.
- Guidelines for the application of interim protection measures for candidate protected areas are being reviewed.
- Third-party compensation guidelines are being assessed in consultation with the PAS partners.

Integrated Resource Planning

The establishment of protected areas is a conservation component of regional land-use planning processes, and is essential to integrated resource management planning. To achieve the goals of this Strategy, protected areas should not be planned and managed as isolated "islands" of nature. In some cases, protected areas must be linked with mechanisms such as buffer zones or corridors to ensure ecological integrity is maintained. The relationship between protected areas and surrounding lands and waters should be considered so that management regimes for both protected areas and adjacent lands can be harmonized for their mutual benefit. The creative application of standard land-use regulations can often promote such compatibility.

Partnerships for Implementation

The process of developing the Strategy has clearly shown that there is much we can learn from each other's goals, values, skills, technology and experience. During the implementation phase of the PAS, we hope that this shared knowledge will continue. We also hope that this experience will lead to shared management agreements between communities and various levels of governments that result in the establishment of new, publicly supported protected areas in the NWT. Our challenge now is to take this Strategy and build upon these initial recommendations so that in the future we can still say we have "wild spaces and heritage places".







Copies of this publication, the complete Protected Areas Strategy document
or any other related documents can be obtained from:

Protected Areas Secretariat

Government of the Northwest Territories

Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development

Parks and Tourism Division

Box 1320, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories X1A 2L9

Email: pas_nwt@gov.nt.ca

Documents are also available for downloading from our website:

www.gov.nt.ca/RWED/pas/index/htm

